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THE POLITICS OF BOHEMIA

by Asher Brynes

One of the wonders of our time was the success of the Communist Party in swinging to its side so many scientists, sociologists, musicians, artists and poets. There had been always a higher proportion of Communist volunteers from the arts and professions than from among the workers, even in the days of Marx. Doubtless more could be recruited by a deliberate effort. The process began swiftly in the mid-Thirties, with the opening of the Popular Front tactic.

In the course of that effort the Party not only lavished the energies of its members and friends to establish front organizations in the universities and among professional groups. It also used Party funds to start enterprises such as Barney Josephson's Cafe Society Uptown. "The purpose", according to Louis F. Budenz, "was to make that night club a rendezvous for artists and entertainers and people of wealth, with whom Communists could there establish acquaintance."

Although the Communists went after every kind of "intellectual", they obviously failed to reach all sectors of this cultural front. In politics they only got as far as the distance, let us say, which separated Alger Hiss from Dean Acheson or Harry D. White from Henry Morgenthau or Philip Jaffe from the China specialists in the State Department. In the arts and sciences, however, they captured enough big and little names to secure a degree of direct control over the sources of opinion-making in New York, and what passes for opinions in Hollywood.

II

Today most of the letterhead organizations into which these intellectual sheep were gathered have collapsed; this is the post-mortem era of the "liberal" Left. Autopsies are now in fashion, and the "liberals" of yesterday are struggling to liberate themselves. The May-June number of the Partisan Review carries, for instance, a fourth installment of a group investigation into the practicality of religion as a refuge for otherwise homeless intellectuals (answer: it is impractical) and a really passionate self-examination by Diana Trilling, former fiction editor of The Nation.

Mrs. Trilling's piece is a 17-page memorandum on the Hiss case which began, apparently, as a book review and developed into an examination of conscience. She concludes that the Case "can be helpful, by

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clarifying for the liberal the historical process of which he and Hiss have together been a part, and by impressing on him a new sense of the reality of poltical ideas". And what is this reality? That politics is concerned with power and consequently political ideas are dynamite. Such ideas must be taken up seriously. They must be handled carefully.

What most Americans are unable to see, continues Mrs. Trilling, "is that by definition totalitarianism is nothing if not a totality. Either you have a free vote, or you do not. Either you have the freedom to criticize your government and change it, or you do not. Either you can write and speak and work as you choose, or you cannot -- and all such criteria as 'free for whom', 'free for what', are only rationalizations." In other words Mrs. Trilling has discovered an absolutely negative idea in politics: there can be no excuse for the denial of freedom. And this has brought her, breathless, within a step of a still greater discovery.

It is almost a century since John Stuart Mill began the writing of his essay On Liberty -- the most impressive statement of its length, in the English language, on the principles of liberalism. This work appears on the assignment list of every college student taking a course in English Thought of the Nineteenth Century or Political Science or the like; and the number of those students amounts to nearly all who register for the basic four-year arts curriculum. Nevertheless, Mill's little book seems to have had no effect on the generation of American intellectuals which, as Mrs. Trilling says, the Roosevelt regime "raised out of isolation and placed at the very center of power".

III

Since the same generation is teaching youngsters in our universities today, it is certain that Mill's book will continue to be crammed rather than taught. That is, until somebody undertakes to show that not only does "the liberal" agree with Mill as far as Mrs. Trilling leads him, but that Mill tells the whole story in spite of the fact that he wrote about liberty 98 years ago.

For in the first place Mill wrote, "Whatever crushes individuality is despotism, by whatever name it may be called, and whether it professes to be enforcing the will of God or the injunctions of men." This single sentence says as much as the entire 17 pages on the Hiss case, and says it better. But in the second place Mill wrote, and this is the truth we are about to discover again, "The only freedom which deserves the name is that of pursuing our own good in our own way. . . . If a

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person possesses any tolerable amount of common sense and experience, his own mode of laying out his existence is the best, not because it is the best in itself, but because it is his own mode."

Finally, Mill wrote, "The initiation of all wise and noble things comes and must come from individuals. . . . The appropriate region of human liberty comprises [therefore] the inward domain of consciousness, demanding liberty of conscience in the most comprehensive sense."

Thus Mill comes to the positive conclusion: We do not know exactly where the undiscovered truth is; therefore we cannot plan our procedure in seeking it. We cannot parcel out the unknown, the entire complex of human possibilities in which the search is to take place. The only way to thresh out the contents of an area of whose dimensions we are ignorant -- and we have never come within sight of the limits of knowledge -- is to give each explorer full freedom.

IV

Throughout the essay Mill returns again and again to the idea that any exercise of political power which has any purpose other than the maintenance of the fullest freedom for each individual, consistent with an equal concern for the freedom of the rest of the grown-up members of the community, is tyranny. "He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because, in the opinions of others, to do so would be wise, or even right. . . . Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign."

He is sovereign because he has a contribution to make even though his actions may reveal, on any single occasion, that he is mistaken about the nature of it. Freedom, said Mill, "is even more indispensable, to enable average human beings to attain the mental stature which they are capable of". And like scientists and thinkers who despite all of the mental furniture they carry about in their heads must submit their thoughts to others, to be evaluated in the market for ideas, so men who toil at simpler tasks must submit their output to the judgment of others who are free to choose or reject it -- if an honest appraisal of either product is to be made.

There is a story of Mrs. Roosevelt and the critics of the Roosevelt-tian WPA, part of which was dedicated to the maintenance, as a painter or sculptor, of practically every person who claimed to be either. The critics complained that few were really painters or sculptors. "They may not be Grade-A artists", she retorted, "but they have Grade-A stomachs." Certainly stomachs were common to them all, but by the same to-

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ken they could have been clerks, cops and car-washers; and the Administration for which she spoke did them an injury by turning them into a claque of people who confused the processes of digestion with the use of their eyes, ears, hands, skills and minds. Most had to grope for jobs more suitable to their talents when the spree was over. Many still carry the psychic scars of their treatment as children at the end of the Thirties, and as men at the beginning of the Forties.

Today, many figures of the old Bohemia -- John Chamberlain, Ben Stolberg, Granville Hicks -- have come through to Mill's whole view, but most are still bogged down in the stagnant pages of the Partisan Review, examining their collective navel. What will make them raise their eyes? Will the war do it, the Grade-A stomach that consumes men?

It is probable, if we wait long enough, that the myth of the "collective political conscience" which they substituted for consciences of their own and were thus led to think they could play any kind of politics without danger to themselves, will be abandoned by the citizens of Bohemia. They have seen two wars to end war within the past generation. On each occasion the Communists picked up the leavings -- and abolished the intellectuals. Now a third war has begun in a place too far away to frighten them but real enough to serve as an eye-opener. We may find, two years hence, a celebration of the centennial of Mill's piece on liberty in the pages of the Partisan Review.

By insisting that each individual has a contribution of his own to make, Mill avoided the fundamental error of the intellectuals of our time, though he lived a long life at the center of the intellectual activity of his day. There were elites of Left and Right in his generation too. He joined none of them.

He knew, for himself, that no one can be a thinker who does not recognize that it is his first duty to follow his intellect to whatever conclusions it may lead.

He knew, for all men, that in proportion to the development of his individuality, each person becomes more valuable to himself, and is therefore capable of being more valuable to others.

He knew that there cannot be freedom for those who live in Bohemia unless there is freedom for all the rest of us.

Asher Brynes is the author of Government Against the People (Dodd, Mead, 1946); his latest work is a study of business and war (Fortune, July).

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Not Merely Gossip *A Supplement to* Human Events Vol. VII, No. 32

AUG 12 1950

By Frank C. Hanighen August 9, 1950

GERMAN REARMAMENT: "The Russian armored divisions could successfully take West Germany before you could say 'Dean Acheson'", remarked a General Staff officer to us yesterday. What this soldier was emphasizing was that the continued failure to rearm Germany is an anomaly in view of the dangerous world situation. He also seemed mad because the American people are not aware of the possibility that Germany might suffer the fate of Korea. We told our friend that it's not the people's fault, it's the fault of the press. The bulk of the newspapers, with some honorable exceptions, have performed a pretty good job of concealing the truth about Germany. That country could prove to be another Korea all during some quiet week end, and the same newspapers would doubtless start clamoring for an explanation of why we were not prepared. The errors of our handling of Germany are coming home to roost today, as the military are discovering, the while they frantically tackle the problem of arming Germany.

For instance: We learn privately from good reporters in the American zone (who of course never manage to get such stuff in their papers in the U.S.) of one extraordinary and revealing reaction of the German people to the news about our military reverses in Korea. Many Germans are saying that "Korea is the revenge for the Nuremberg trials". They mean (and really believe it) that our lack of preparedness in the Korean war springs from the unwillingness of U.S. General Staff to become "war criminals" by the fact of preparing for Soviet aggression. This, of course, is nonsense and sophisticated Germans recognize it as such. But the fact that many Germans believe the myth is indicative of the effects of Mr. Justice Jackson's fancy kangaroo court in Nuremberg. In this connection, we note that Karl von Weigand, veteran American correspondent for the Hearst papers, cabled on August 5 from Frankfurt that, before any German army can be built, "all generals, admirals and diplomats sentenced to prison at the Nuremberg and other Allied military tribunals must be released and rehabilitated".

This dispatch from von Weigand confirms one of the points in our story of July 19 concerning the conditions laid down by German military as essential preconditions to German rearmament. This genuine "scoop" has been entirely ignored by the American press, although almost every week stories from HUMAN EVENTS (on other subjects than Germany) are picked up and quoted by syndicates, press associations and newspapers. But not on Germany. We do not take credit for an unusual reporting feat in making the facts public. Any ordinary correspondent in Germany could have got them; probably some did, but knew very well their papers in the U.S. would not use them. The American press will bear a heavy responsibility for failure to inform its readers about Germany if that country follows Korea's fate.

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POWER: The confusion which mars the Washington scene these days has so blurred the vision of even the best informed and realistic observers here, that they are unable to answer the question which matters more than anything else -- What and where is the locus of power? In other words, what camarilla has the decisive influence over the President? Is it the military, or is it the Fair Deal clique? Some evidence points one way, some another. But, is there a trend which suggests that the military and their civilian "straw men" are gaining ascendancy? There are as yet no positive signs of such a trend, although some observers believe that military dominance is inevitable.

One keen-eyed civilian observer, who does believe in such inevitability, offered the following analysis. He says: The trend towards a firm military resist-

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ance to Soviet Russia actually began shortly before the fateful June 25, when Truman decided to intervene in Korea. As you know, from the day of his last inauguration Truman had pursued a policy of what was really appeasement of Russia. The Left Wing and Fair Dealers ran the show, channelled spending into welfare and Marshall Plan rather than into military preparations. The Marshall Plan boondoggling served to quiet elements in this country suspicious of appeasement.

But early in June (our friend continues) the President became somewhat concerned at the shape of things. The failure of Tydings-ism to suppress public suspicion of the Administration policy and bureaucrats increased as McCarthy continued to make his charges. Also, the service chiefs became restive about the Far East and held a conference with MacArthur, also restive, in Tokyo. Truman feared that MacArthur would publicly "blow the gaff" on the Far Eastern situation. Such a move, coming on top of the success of what the Administration calls "McCarthy-ism", would not be helpful to Truman and his party. Accordingly, about ten days before June 25, Truman had a long conference with former Undersecretary of State Robert A. Lovett. The next day, Truman placed Mr. Averell Harriman in the White House, presumably as a sort of successor-in-training for Acheson. The stage was set for June 25 and the reversal of foreign policy.

Our interlocutor continues: You ask why Lovett and Harriman had influence on the reversal. Well, it is true that folks here in Washington regard Harriman's talents with more than a trace of humor. A witty lady said: "Averell is an amazing example of adult education." The question is, will he be sufficiently educated soon enough? The answer to that is Lovett. That very able gentleman is in the firm of Brown Brothers and Harriman. He was also Assistant Secretary of War for Air during the war, and indeed voices the attitudes of the General Staff. So, the General Staff via Lovett, as an unofficial adviser to Harriman, will shape our policies abroad. Additionally, the Staff has well indoctrinated Mr. Stuart Symington, who is the nearest thing to an economic director which we have today. It is inevitable that the military will run this show.

Tentative and speculative as we regard the above analysis, it does seem worthy to present as a provocative contribution to discussion about the all-important power setup within the Executive branch of the Government.

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IMPEACHMENT? In a column (July 16) of the Boston Herald under the by-line of Bill Cunningham, and in an editorial in the same paper on July 26, the possibility of impeachment of the President is delicately raised and delicately dismissed. The grounds for such a step, we gather, would be mishandling of military and diplomatic affairs leading up to the war in Korea. Now, not only is the Herald a powerful and respected newspaper, but Cunningham's column is widely reproduced throughout the New England press. Those who read between the lines, and know the tricks of the journalistic trade, have not overlooked the matter. We may never hear about this "possibility" again. But, if disaster occurs and the Pusan beachhead becomes another Bataan, we may hear some blunt talk from New England. Such a prospect can hardly be overlooked by the White House.

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IN PRAISE OF HOARDING: (Edna Lonigan writes from Capitol Hill.) The Government is stock-piling goods needed for war, and the housewife, God bless her, is doing the same thing for her family. There is no better preparation for a long war than to have every family well-supplied with reserves. One reason why we had so little tension in the last war was because we had time to put our family larders in good shape. The rush of consumer buying in the comparatively prosperous years, 1940 and

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1941, was, like normal buying by the housewife, a voluntary method of keeping the family plant in condition. Dresses, kitchen utensils, sheets, automobiles, etc., etc., purchased in 1941, were not examples of uneconomic "panic buying". They constituted a very constructive way of outfitting each family with the means to withstand a long siege.

Prices recently went up because of the brief wave of panic buying. But consumers are past that now. They are even returning goods to the stores. Prices really go up because the value of the dollar goes down. When Mr. Truman announces that he will need ten or more billions for war, no rationing, no price control, can stop the dollar's descent. Cleverly concealed inflation is inflation none the less.

We hope our readers will not think us merely flippant, if we say the proper policy for any sensible government would be to advise consumers to hoard. This is not topsy-turvy thinking, but merely reversal of the topsy-turvy thinking of the planned economy, which Americans are now so used to. The planners do not realize that free purchasing can accomplish all that the planners can plan and do it better. For one thing, encouragement of hoarding would put an end to greedy buying; the fun would be gone. On the economic side, it would provide costless storage space for large amounts of goods at the consumer end of the distribution network, where they would make the least demand on the railroads at the time when munitions shipments were heavy. It would also send working capital back through the network via retail merchants to manufacturers, so they could speed up production of needed civilian goods while the military were perfecting their designs. Incidentally the Swiss Government followed the policy proposed above.

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FEDERAL-STATE RELATIONSHIPS: Miss Longian reports that the Social Security bill is coming before the Senate with a very important amendment by Senator Knowland of California. It provides that the Social Security Administration may not deprive a state of its grant from tax funds because of failure to obey Federal "standards", until a court has reviewed the case. Naturally the Administration is turning all its propaganda guns on this innocent looking proposal, because control of "standards" is one of the most important tools the New Deal possesses in its attempt to streamline the states and manage them from Washington.

Federal "standards" are of course nothing but Federal rules and regulations. They may be good or bad. There is no basis for the naive assumption that they are higher than state and private standards. In the past Federal standards used to be about half way between those of the best and the poorest states. High standards were worked out first in the industrial states, with the worst problems and the most money. Then they spread by voluntary action. There is no reason for Federal control unless force is a better remedy than consent.

In this conection, we should note a principle by which Congress can reduce legislative confusion. The Federal Government cannot solve the problems of defense and foreign policy, unless it is quickly relieved of the burden of problems that rightfully belong to the states. The Hoover Commission made a study of Federal-State relationships, which laid down the principle that the Federal Government has no place in health, welfare, education or housing. It proposed that the central government be relieved of all such programs and, at the same time, appropriate taxes be reserved for the states. Congress can quickly increase both the energy and the revenue of the Federal Government, for war and foreign policy, by returning immediately to the states all responsibility for individual and family welfare. We have in our associations of Governors, state welfare officials and others, all the machinery we need for transmission of standards from one state to another, as rapidly as they have been tried out and found effective.

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Book Events

Compulsory Medical Care and the Welfare State, by Melchior Palyi. New York: The Committee for Constitutional Government. $2.00. Reviewed by Frank Chodorov.

"There is not a single statement of fact in my little book that is open to question", said Dr. Melchior Palyi to this reviewer. "I put a whole year into gathering the material and checking every statement, and behind that research work there is a lifetime of personal observation of how compulsory health insurance works. My value judgments may be termed propagandistic, but the facts are incontrovertible." And so, in Compulsory Medical Care and the Welfare State we do not have a literary indictment of politicalized medicine but an array of facts and figures that is far more damaging. Dr. Palyi begins his story, quite naturally, with Bismarck, showing how authoritarian medicine fitted in with the nationalistic program of the Iron Duke, a program that led ineluctably to Hitlerism. He traces its development to the "free" sanitaria and rest cures that Stalin provides for the faithful of the Party. In between, he covers the costs and the social consequences of medical monopolization by the various governments of Europe.

Health insurance, he points out, was not invented by politicians. It was an idea that sprang spontaneously out of the industrial revolution. The rational self-interest of workers gave rise to co-operative protection against illness; for many years it flourished on a purely voluntary basis. Political intrusion was insinuated by way of subsidies. Modest help called for more, with a consequent increase of taxation for this purpose, and every contribution simply added to political power over a purely personal business. With Bismarck the monopolization of medicine was done consciously in the interests of political power, the ostensible improvement in the health of the people being merely the excuse; in other countries the original purpose may have been eleemosynary, but the enhancement of power followed nevertheless.

The story is necessarily repetitive, varying only in details. Bevan's current "free" medicine scheme, with its crushing burden on the British economy, began in 1793 with the Friendly Societies Act. France started later, achieving by 1948 a pay roll tax of over six per cent of the workers' wages for questionable health insurance. In Switzerland, despite the repeated vote of the people against compulsory methods, subsidies were forced on voluntary health panels. Sweden (claiming the world's lowest death rate) began heavy subsidization of voluntary health insurance in 1935 and is now thinking of taking it over and instituting the British plan. Under the Weimar Republic, medical insurance included swimming pools, while Hitler used it for compelling compliance. Everywhere, the medical profession has suffered, economically, ethically and scientifically. The doctor's first consideration is political; every patient is a potential racketeer. Hospital management consists largely of preparing statistics as a basis for larger appropriations. Shady practices creep into the pharmaceutical business. And everywhere the police becomes a necessary adjunct of pathology.

Dr. Palyi has given us an authoritative book on socialized medicine. As one reads it one wonders whether our own Mr. Truman and Dr. Ewing have any acquaintance with these facts. Is it possible that these advocates of socialized medicine are entirely ignorant of its history and its effects in those countries where it has been instituted? One cannot believe it. But, if they know the story why do they press for the adoption of the scheme in this country? And the answer that spontaneously comes to mind is that their motive is purely political.

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